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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Corrigendum

Paragraph 65

In the first sentence, *for* E/CN.4/2001/12 *read* E/CN.4/2000/12

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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Addendum

Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

Report on activities (September 2000-July 2001)

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I. Background

1. On 8 April 1994, the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), at the fourth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, adopted a declaration recommending that the United Nations create a subregional centre for human rights and democracy, under the auspices of the then United Nations Centre for Human Rights and located at Yaoundé, with the mission of:

(a) Contributing to training personnel responsible for the management of activities relating to human rights and democracy;

(b) Providing support for the creation and/or strengthening of national institutions responsible for human rights and democracy;

(c) Cooperating in disseminating international instruments relating to human rights and democracy.

2. The General Assembly, by its resolution 54/55 A of 1 December 1999, recalling the recommendation of the ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to lend their support to the establishment of the Centre. At the same session, the General Assembly allocated an initial amount of US$ 1 million to the project.

3. Following a needs assessment and project formulation mission to Yaoundé in June 2000, carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in collaboration with the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, OHCHR sent an officer for three months (September-December 2000) to undertake the preparatory phase of the Centre's establishment. The officer's mission consisted of preparing legal texts relating to the setting up and operation of the Centre, namely the draft agreement with the host country, and initiating dialogue with the Government of the host country, the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cameroon and the ECCAS general secretariat, with a view to assuring the future cooperation of those bodies with the Centre. The mission also had the objective of making arrangements for equipping the Centre (preparation of the offices which were to house the Centre, purchase of equipment etc.).

4. In March 2001, OHCHR sent an officer to commence the operations of the Centre. These began with the organization of a subregional workshop on human rights education in Central Africa. On the basis of the recommendations contained in the declaration adopted at the workshop, a programme of priority action covering the years 2001 and 2002 was adopted and approved by the High Commissioner (see sect. IV below).

5. In June 2001, the High Commissioner met with the Executive Secretary of ECCAS at Lusaka to discuss the modalities for cooperation between OHCHR and ECCAS in carrying out the Centre's mandate.

6. The present report covers the activities carried out by the Centre in 2001, and those which remain to be undertaken until the end of the year, as well as an outline of the programme of activities for the biennium 2002-2003.

II. Structure of the Centre

7. The Yaoundé Centre was established as a subregional office of OHCHR in cooperation with ECCAS and the Department of Political Affairs. The Centre works closely with country and subregional offices of United Nations agencies in Cameroon.

8. The host country agreement between OHCHR and the Government of Cameroon was signed on 12 September 2001 and the Centre was set up in rented premises until such time as a United Nations House is established.

9. The Centre's activities are supervised by an interim coordinator while the recruitment of the head of the office is being finalized. The interim coordinator is assisted by two experts recruited for the establishment period, that is, from May to December 2001. Additional experts will be recruited to undertake the specific activities outlined in the programme of activities.

10. By the end of 2001, the Centre will have the following temporary assistance staff: two international staff members — a Head of Office (P-5) and a Programme Officer (P-4); and three local staff members, a documentalist, an executive secretary (G-5)

and a driver (G-3). An additional P-3 position for a Human Rights Officer will be added in 2002 to allow the training programmes to be carried out.

III. Partners

11. Since the beginning of its operations, the Centre has been developing partnerships with the United Nations agencies working in Cameroon and in Central Africa, and with other relevant bilateral and multilateral partners. The Centre brought together UNDP and the Cameroon Institute of International Relations for the organization in March 2001 of the workshop on human rights education in Central Africa. Similarly, the Centre collaborated with the UNDP Cameroon office and the subregional office for Central Africa of the International Labour Organization to organize a subregional consultation in July 2001 for non-governmental organizations working in the field of women's rights in Central Africa. This consultation fell within the framework of the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

12. The Centre was invited to participate in various inter-agency meetings convened by UNDP. The Centre also collaborated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), especially for the acquisition of literature and other material for the successful operation of the future documentation, information and research unit. The Centre and the UNESCO subregional office in Yaoundé intend to cooperate further on the workshop on national human rights action plans scheduled for the last quarter of 2001. UNESCO has agreed also to assist the Centre with its expertise as well as with teaching materials for the Centre's documentation unit.

IV. Main activities carried out or to be undertaken by the Centre in the short term

13. The Centre's main activities are training, research, provision of advisory services and technical cooperation in the fields of human rights and democracy, and raising public awareness of human rights and democratic values. The activities and projects are divided into two sections: human rights activities, and activities related to democracy.

A. Human rights activities

1. Activities in 2001

Training

14. Following the initial establishment phase (September-December 2000), the Centre commenced its activities in March 2001 by holding a subregional workshop on human rights education in Central Africa, at Yaoundé on 15 and 16 March 2001.

15. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the UNDP Cameroon office and the Cameroon Institute of International Relations. The 40 participants were made up of government representatives from 10 of the 11 ECCAS member States, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights.

16. The workshop adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Education in Central Africa, and an action plan of priority activities to be carried out by the Centre in 2001 and 2002. On the basis of the action plan, the Centre established a biennial programme of activities which was approved by the High Commissioner on 28 April 2001. The High Commissioner sent the programme to the Governments of the 11 Central African countries at the beginning of May 2001.

17. In the context of its training programme, the Centre is in the process of organizing two subregional workshops in 2001, one on the development of national human rights action plans (end-October 2001), and the other on respect for human rights by security forces (mid-December 2001).

Advisory services and technical cooperation

18. *Technical cooperation project on strengthening the operational capacity of the Cameroon National Committee on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.* The Centre recruited four national consultants to prepare and organize a tripartite forum for the National Committee, Ministers and non-governmental organizations at Yaoundé on 23 and 24 July 2001. The participants adopted a declaration and action plan for their future collaboration.

19. *Support for strengthening the activities of Central African non-governmental organizations.* Technical and financial support was provided for the organization of a subregional consultation of Central African non-

governmental organizations concerned with women's rights, at Yaoundé from 16 to 18 July 2001. This was undertaken with a view to preparing for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The participants adopted a declaration and action plan. They also set up a coordination mechanism for non-governmental organizations working in the field of women's rights. They elected two delegates to the NGO Forum and the Conference.

National, subregional and regional activities

20. *Regional non-governmental organization consultation, Dakar, 19-23 June 2001.* The Centre was represented by a national consultant at the African NGO preparatory meeting for the Conference, held at Dakar. With the assistance of the Special Rapporteur on women's rights of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Centre's consultant took the opportunity to organize a meeting of the Central African non-governmental organizations concerned with women's rights participating in the Dakar consultation. The consultant reported to the Centre her experience of the Dakar consultation, which was of great benefit in the preparation of the Yaoundé subregional consultation.

21. *National Human Rights Conference, Kinshasa, 24-30 June 2001.* The Centre's coordinator and one Centre consultant attended the Kinshasa Conference and participated, respectively, in the work of the committee on human rights education and the committee on the administration of justice and human rights, as well as in various plenary sessions. The delegation also had working sessions with State authorities, Congolese non-governmental organizations dealing with women's rights, the OHCHR field office in Kinshasa, members of the human rights section of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Chairman of the South African National Human Rights Commission.

Coordination with OHCHR and other United Nations field offices

22. During the Yaoundé workshop on human rights education, in March 2001, the Deputy High Commissioner held a coordination meeting with the heads of the various field offices (Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) which participated in the workshop. The participants recommended that periodic meetings be held in order to enhance the coordination of their activities with those of the subregional Centre in respect of training. A meeting was scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting of the heads of OHCHR field presences, to be held at Geneva in October 2001.

Information activities

23. The Centre has published the first issue of its trimestrial bulletin on human rights and democracy, covering the period from March to June 2001. The bulletin was posted on the OHCHR web site and 2,000 copies are also being printed for wide public distribution through the United Nations Information Centre in Yaoundé. The second issue of the bulletin is currently being prepared.

24. A documentation, research and information unit is being established and is expected to become operational in November/December 2001. UNESCO is contributing manuals, books and legal texts on promotion of human rights and democratic principles. The partnership of UNESCO with the Centre also includes expertise for needs assessment, curriculum development and human rights education and training. In addition UNESCO will contribute to the Centre's public awareness campaigns through its network of chairs, national commissions and associated schools. The Centre's research activities will include a study on Central African minorities and respect for their political, economic and cultural rights. The Centre is developing an information kit on respecting human rights in periods of armed conflict, for use by field offices and peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

2. Biennial activities (2002-2003)

Training

25. The following activities have been planned: (1) human rights training session for political leaders, in the first semester of 2002; (2) human rights training session for media practitioners, in the second semester of 2002; (3) annual training course for civil servants and human rights defenders on international human rights mechanisms, to be held in June 2002 and June 2003.

Advisory services and technical cooperation

26. The following activities have been planned: (1) continuation of the technical cooperation programme for the national human rights bodies; (2) provision of advisory services and technical cooperation to Governments and non-governmental organizations, upon request; (3) support for strengthening the activities of human rights non-governmental organizations and networks.

Capacity-building in human rights and democracy

27. The following activities have been planned: (1) implementation of a fellowship programme; (2) development of a roster or resource bank of expertise in human rights and democracy in Central Africa, starting in January 2002.

External relations and partnerships

28. The following activities have been planned: (1) signature and application of a memorandum of understanding with ECCAS through its general secretariat; (2) development of partnerships with various national, African, and international organizations sharing the same goals as the Centre.

B. Activities related to democracy

29. The Centre plans to commence its programme of activities on the subject of democracy before the end of 2001. The establishment of a temporary assistance position for a Programme Officer would give impetus to this component. The terms of reference of this position would include the following activities:

(a) Researching and compiling relevant documentation on democratization, both within the United Nations and in the countries of the subregion, and on progress in the democratization process in those countries;

(b) Studying and assessing technical cooperation needs for the subregion's democratization process;

(c) Developing a programme of activities and technical cooperation projects for the countries of the subregion, in consultation with all interested parties;

(d) Preparing and executing a strategy to integrate human rights and democratic principles into the United Nations activities and programmes on conflict prevention in the subregion;

(e) Developing education and training programmes for the promotion of democratic principles and the human rights aspects of democracy to target groups, in particular government authorities, political parties, media and civil society;

(f) Providing assistance to Governments, upon request, for the preparation of elections, and the development and execution of training programmes and policies in the field of election monitoring, in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, concerned bodies and non-governmental organizations;

(g) Providing advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of democracy to countries of the subregion, as requested by Governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and representatives of the Secretary-General in Central Africa;

(h) Assisting, at the request of Governments, the creation and/or strengthening of national institutions responsible for managing activities related to democracy in their countries (ombudsmen, national electoral commissions etc.);

(i) Developing and strengthening cooperation networks in the subregion, including identifying potential areas of cooperation in the field of democracy;

(j) Providing training during workshops and other similar activities in the subregion;

(k) Undertaking representational and other missions in the subregion, on behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other entities of the United Nations Secretariat as appropriate.

V. Next steps

30. In the immediate and short term, the Centre is engaged in the following activities:

(a) Completion of the recruitment process for the head of the subregional Centre and for a Programme Officer on democracy;

(b) Organization of a subregional workshop on the development of national plans of action in the field of human rights and a training session in the field of human rights for police and security forces;

(c) Commencement of the internship programme;

(d) Establishment of the documentation unit of the Centre.

31. The Centre will be formally inaugurated at the next ECCAS Conference of Heads of State and Government, to be held in Yaoundé at a date yet to be determined.